

## Southwark: National Synod Day

- Jun 3rd, 2022



Image: Vatican News/St George's Cathedral

**Source:** Vatican News/St George's Cathedral

Bishops, clergy, religious and lay people who have been part of the diocesan synodal consultation processes, gathered in Southwark for the National Synod Day, on Wednesday.

Canon Christopher Thomas, General Secretary of the Bishops Conference of England and Wales, described the event as an "important moment in the journey together as we review prayerfully the draft of the national Synthesis".

The day began with prayer before the Blessed Sacrament in St George's Cathedral, with reflections on the two **icons of the Synod** for a Synodal Church proposed in the Preparatory Document. Archbishop John Wilson of Southwark, then led the celebration of Holy Mass.

In his letter of introduction, Canon Thomas pointed out that the day was "between the Solemnities of Ascension and Pentecost and this moment of people with their bishops is like the pre-Pentecost Church" when the Apostles and the disciples of Jesus were gathered in the Upper Room with Mary.

In the afternoon, participants reviewed and discussed together the first draft of the National Synthesis.

This Synthesis represents more than 700 pages of material the Bishops' Conference has received from dioceses, national organisations, universities, Catholic groups and individuals. A **national synthesis team**, composed of nine members, spent the month of May prayerfully reflecting on all the Diocesan Synod submissions and drawing up the first draft.

Group round table discussions took place in the Amigo Hall next to the Cathedral. They were facilitated by Sr Bernadette Reis from the Vatican Dicastery for Communication. All present were able to give feedback on how the draft synthesis reflected their diocesan synthesis, what they felt was missing, things they found surprising or disappointing, and topics that they felt needed further discernment and analysis.

One point that emerged strongly was the desire to continue growing in the synodal process both at the diocesan and national levels.

One group said that now that the Church in England and Wales has been through the synodal process, the need remains to "show and reveal how it is embedded and how it will go forward."

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster and President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, brought the day to a conclusion. In closing remarks, he said: "In this upper room, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we have had a unique window on the life of the Church in England and Wales - not complete, but a glimpse, a panorama, that we rarely see drawn together in this way. We are learning the art of listening, the discipline of listening, which does not come naturally, but is something that requires self-control and humility. We are learning that. This is a hugely important quality in the life of the Church which has not always been present."

The National Synthesis Team will take this feedback and incorporate it into the first draft so as to produce a final draft. Their hope is to have a final draft by the end of June, at which point it will be available on the Episcopal Conference web site.

In the meantime, the Bishops will undertake a discernment to formulate their response for the synodal process that will be forwarded on, together with the National Synthesis, to be incorporated into the Regional European synthesis.

A Synod celebration is also being planned for 29 June, in Westminster Cathedral, at 10.30am to celebrate the Conclusion of this phase of the synodal process in England and Wales.

Reported on **The Independent Catholic News** Website